Using podcasts to help students become knowledge-able in a non-major biology course

Daniel L. Hajek
H. Tak Cheung

2013 CTLT Conference
H. Tak Cheung

• Emeritus Professor of Microbiology
  – Director of School of Biological Sciences
• Developer, Instructor, and Originator of
  – BSC 101
  – Since 1995
BSC 101
Fundamental Concepts in Biology

• General Education Inner Core
• Natural Science Sequence
• Laboratory course
• Annual enrollment – 2,500 students
• Lectures (50 min) – twice each week
• Laboratory (1 hr 50 min) – once per week
Daniel L. Hajek

- Illinois State University Class of 2011
  - Major in English Studies
- Enrolled in BSC 101 Spring 2008
- Started work at WGLT in February 2008
  - Began working as a student announcer
  - Introduced to NPR programming
English Project

- Assigned to compose an essay emulating our favorite author’s writing style
  - Produced a podcast segment
  - Featured Dr. Cheung and a discussion on bower birds
Course Podcast Project

• Stories related to topics discussed in class
• Interest and curiosity to the students
• Relevance and application in everyday life
• A student’s perspective on biological topics
• Produced in the format of a radio program
• Titled “Your Place in the Universe”
Ants Dominate
Podcast Production

• Interview with Dr. Cheung
  – Edit down audio clips
  – Research topics and integrate narration
  – Incorporate a soundtrack
• Uploaded each episode to our website
  – Monitored user feedback
• Produced 15 episodes
Student Feedback

- Raised interest in biology topics
- Created relevance in biological principles
- Found applications in everyday life
- Enjoyed having another student discussing biological topics
- Podcast preferred to be shorter (<5 to 6 min)
Season Two: Biology Improves Your Life

• Designed to correlate with each lecture
• Produced two episodes a week
• Students were asked to listen to each episode before attending lecture
• 4-6 min in length
• Topics were introduced by stories of interest to students
Podcast Production

• Tight production schedule
• Collaboration through e-mail
• Rapid turn around time
  –Produced in 3 to 4 hours
TOP ROCK-ROLL TRIO KILLED IN AIRPLANE CRASH

Bail Cut on Yanks in Tijuana

Reds Halt U.S. Convoy From Berlin

Valley Star Among Victims of Crashup Near Iowa Airport

Virginia's School Pupil -- Poulson Oks Start Race

Negro Pupils Arrive at Stratford Junior High, Arlington

Bail on some of the 20 U.S. residents held in Tijuana on gambling charges has been reduced from $1,000 to $400 and on others to $800. State Atty. George Stanley M. Scott was informed by telephone to-day. The alleged operator of the games was still held in lieu of $2,500 bond.

BY PAUL COATES

Brown Says

MASON CITY, Ia., Feb. 3 (AP) - Three of the country's top rock 'n' roll idols were killed early today when their chartered plane crashed shortly after taking off from the airport here.

Killed were Ritchie Valens, 17, of 13428 Remington St., Pacoima; Buddy Holly, 22, of Lubbock, Tex., and J. P. Richardson, 24, of New Orleans, known professionally as 'Big Bopper.'
Student Responses

• Enjoyed the storytelling approach
• Found relevance of the biological concepts through the podcast
• Looked forward to the biological explanations provided in lecture
• Found the music interesting and stimulating
• Appreciated the use of technology embodied in the podcast
NPR Internship

• Nationwide selection of internship candidates
• NPR-West, Los Angeles, CA
  – One intern per semester on National Desk
• My qualifications
  – Production experience with biology podcasts
• Duties:
  – Shadow reporters in the field
  – Help with story research and writing transcripts
  – In-field recordings
• L.A. Votes To Limit Vendors on Venice Boardwalk
  —All Things Considered

• ‘Copiale Cipher:’ Mysterious Code Broken At Last
  —Weekend Edition Sunday
Chance To Spot Rare Supernova Fading Fast